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Letters

Sorority Success Story

Dear Editor:

Celeste Fremon's story on "future Republican housewives" ["The Great Sorority Rush," L.A. Weekly, Nov. 21-27] brought back amusing memories for me. In 1959 I was blackballed by all but two houses at USC for being Jewish. Actually, I wasn't — but my father was. A kindly neighbor from my home town of Glendale, a woman who was active in sorority alumnae affairs, ratted on me, telling Panhellenic I had been lying when I wrote "Protestant" on my rush application.

Naive enough to believe the propaganda that you were dead if you weren't Greek, I pledged a house anyway, the one with the second-ugliest girls on campus. When I asked my pledge adviser why the house had taken a purported Jew, she replied, "We liked you so much, we pledged you in spite of it."

Oh.

A year later, when my sorority sisters were coercing me to date the nerdy frat brothers of the boys they were pinned to, I told them the Greek system probably *wasn't* for everybody. (Namely, me.) That's when I realized it was harder to get *out* than *in*. Two seniors kept me awake all of one night telling me I was jeopardizing my college career, that I'd end up in a kind of limbo — neither Greek nor independent, trusted by no one, a nothing. I quit anyway, and the day I moved out, scarcely a sister would speak to me.

As it turned out, the senior sisters had lied. I went on to become a real Helen of Troy, one of the 10 outstanding women of my class. I lived happily ever after. Oh, and I married the first registered Democrat I met.

—Mary Ellen Strote
Calabasas

LIFE IN HELL
DRAWN WHILE SICK

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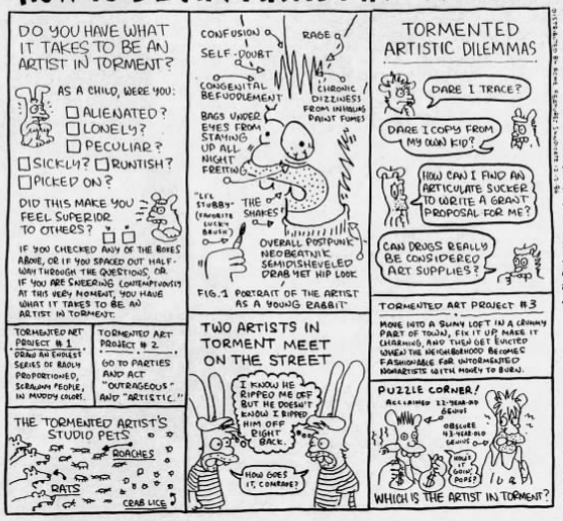
HOW TO BE AN ARTIST IN TORMENT



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Useless

Dear Editor:

I'm really *sure*! Who is John Pastier and where (when) did he go to school? I never expect to find architectural criticism worth reading in newspapers, nor am I fond of anything Hardly Holzman Pfeiffer Associates has ever done (attractive in its parts at best, but always cheap, cheap, cheap!), so I guess it's my own fault for reading his article in the first place. Yet I must respond, or I won't sleep tonight.

As a piece of criticism, the piece, entitled "A Wing and a Prayer" [*L.A. Weekly*, Nov. 21-27], doesn't deserve a passing grade, let alone publication. Just because the writer knows that Louis Kahn did the Kimbell Museum doesn't mean he *knows* enough about design to write about it. Once the historical groundwork is laid in the first four paragraphs, the article progresses from one cliche to another. What is revealed is not the project but the writer's subjective prejudices. So *what* if the architects appropriated motifs from the Vietnam Memorial, Norge refrigerators, old gas stations or *Miami Vice*. The point should be made whether it was done well or poorly. A "photogenic" yet "useless" facade seems appropriate for a building that houses photogenic and useless objects. (After all, what supposedly separates fine art from crafts *is* its very "uselessness.")

"Joy or wit" are not characteristics of architecture, they are characteristics of *language*. Delight *is* a characteristic of architecture. Does the building evoke a state or sense of delight? Is it accommodating and programmatically correct? This is usually where HHPA's designs fall apart.

The most distressing aspect of the sort of "criticism" offered by Mr. Pastier, however, is that it doesn't enlighten its audience (the general public) in regard to architecture and design. I am not looking forward to having to listen to non-architects repeating Mr. Pastier's opinions (as they will), for those opinions are neither joyous nor witty. Thus, in one stroke, Mr. Pastier has rendered much future dinner-party chatter annoying and pedestrian.

—Tim Hilton
Santa Monica

JOHN PASTIER REPLIES: *I am sorry to spoil so many dinner-party conversations. Perhaps Tim Hilton can find dining companions who don't repeat other people's opinions. As to my own shortcomings as a critic, there's very little that I can do after 17 years in the business. Fortunately for Mr. Hilton, Los Angeles is rich in architectural criticism, and he can find enlightenment by reading Richard Meltzer or Sam Hall Kaplan.*

Don't Hold Your Breath

Dear Editor:

I object to the peevish and mean-spirited letters you have published regarding Ruth Hirschman and KCRW. I cannot believe that they are representative of reader correspondence on this subject. Disregarding whatever quibbles we each might have with any broadcasting entity, KCRW remains, unquestionably, the finest radio station that has ever materialized in Los Angeles. It is a treasure to be cherished and nurtured. What motivates these volunteers and what keeps the public tuning in is KCRW's vision of intelligent, literate and innovative programming that both informs and entertains. As for Ruth Hirschman, can there really be any doubt that she is the chief visionary?

The *Weekly* professes to value and promote the cultural opportunities of this city. How can you allow such a vibrant and indispensible cultural asset to be maligned without challenge?

I await your apology.

—Don Staricka
La Crescenta

HURTING?

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